REMARKS

In accordance with the foregoing, new claims 21-24 are added, of which claims 21 and 23 are independent.

These new claims afford a varying scope of protection for the invention and introduce no new matter.

Accordingly, approval and entry of the new claims 21-24 are respectfully requested.

STATUS OF APPLICATION

All of the heretofore pending claims 1-5, 7, and 9-20 are rejected for obviousness under 35 USC § 103(a) over Ishikawa et al., newly cited in the subject FINAL Office Action, in combination with Herron et al., of record.

While the Action concedes that this is new ground of rejection (see item 3 at page 4), the Action was nevertheless made final, which would appear to be therefor a premature final rejection.

Nevertheless, to expedite prosecution, applicants have voluntarily filed an RCE to continue prosecution and therefore present this Preliminary Amendment in the RCE as a response to the FINAL Office Action of January 29, 2003.

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

ISHIKAWA ET AL.

Ishikawa et al. discloses an electrical connector assembly including "interengaging plug (1) and receptacle connector (2) components" (Abstract, lines 1-2 and col. 3, lines 36-42)) with a pair of engagement screws at respective outer edges of the plug and threadingly engaged in the receptacle to affix the plug to the receptacle. A first array 52 of electronic contacts, or terminals, 3 of the plug component are engaged by a second array 53 of terminals 4 of the receptacle component 2. The plug and receptacle thus merely provide a convenient interconnection of multiple wires 51 of a cable 30 (Fig. 2) with corresponding circuits of a computer (col. 3, lines 42-47).

HERRON ET AL.

Herron discloses a docking station 18 having multiple connectors on a front surface, or bezel, 288 (see Figs. 3 and 32) aligned with, and detachably connectable to, corresponding, multiple connectors on a back surface of a CPU 12 (see Figs. 5 and 28). The connectors 46' through 55' of the docking station thus are positioned to be aligned with and to engage the respective connectors 46-55 mounted on the rear wall of the chassis 20. (Col. 15, lines 21-34) Further, the rear wall, or bezel 290, of the docking module 18 has plural contacts or connectors, shown with double-prime superscripts, i.e., 46" through 55" and which substantially duplicate those variously on the rear wall 24 of the computer and the front wall of the docking module 18 (Col. 16, lines 20-29). As further explained:

> To each of these connectors on the rear bezel 290 are connected, via appropriate cabling the ancillary equipment intended for use with the computer 10. Such equipment may include a video apparatus, a printer, a modem, etc. It will be appreciated that cabling, once attached to the docking module 18, is intended to remain essentially permanently attached regardless of whether the computer 10 is attached to the docking module, or not.

(Col. 16 at lines 29-37) (See also discussion of docking module at col. 14, lines 1 et seq.)

TRAVERSE OF REJECTION BASED ON THE COMBINATION OF HERRON ET AL. AND ISHIKAWA ET AL.

It is respectfully submitted that *prima facie* obviousness of the combination of the two references has not been shown.

The principle reference to Herron provides a docking module which remains permanently connected at its rear, plural connection terminals to a respective plurality of peripheral components. The front bezel of the docking module 18 replicates the plural connector arrangements of the rear surface of the computer chassis 20. The Herron docking station module 18 therefor is to facilitate a single simultaneous interconnection of the plural connectors on the rear of the CPU 12 with the respective, plural cables connecting the rear surface connectors of the docking station 18 to respective, multiple peripheral devices.

Ishikawa, on the other hand, merely provides a plug type connector assembly for connecting multiple wirings of a cable to plural terminals of a plug connectable to respective

circuits of a computer. The plug of Ishikawa therefore is incompatible with the intent and purpose of the docking station 18 of Herron et al. and the respective devices of the two references fulfill altogether different connection functions between altogether different structures-- i.e., Ishikawa plug connects plural wires of a cable to plural terminals of a connector on an electronic unit, the plural terminals being connected to plural respective circuits within the electronic unit, whereas the Herron et al. docking module replicates the multiple connectors of a CPU on an output (back) side of the docking station for permanent connection through individual, plural cables to respective and different individual peripheral devices.

It is submitted that the structures of the two references serve altogether different purposes and function differently and neither has any reason or purpose to be modified by the teachings of the other. *Prima facie* obviousness of the combination not having been shown, it follows that the rejection fails and should be withdrawn.

The detachable connector 53 in accordance with the invention, on the other hand, has a different structure and serves a different purpose than either of the references and the claims thereto patentably distinguish over each thereof, taken singly or in any proper combination. Specifically, it is intended for use with an electronic apparatus 1 having a single common connector 51, as shown in Fig. 2b, for example, and which includes plural individual contacts which are contacted by respective plural contacts of the single, common connector 55 when coupled to the common connector 51 of the apparatus 1. Further, as shown in Fig. 2b, the rear or output end of the connector 53 carries a plurality of connectors CN which connect through corresponding cables to a plurality of respective peripheral devices.

In accordance with the claimed invention, therefore, the second common connector 55 in the housing of the common, detachable connector 53 affords a detachable connection to the mating, common connector 51 of the electronic apparatus 1--e.g., in Figs. 2a and 2b--and terminals of the connector 55 are connected to the connectors CN of the connector 53 which, in turn, are to be electrically connected through corresponding cables to respective and different peripheral devices to be used by the electronic apparatus 1.

Neither the structure nor the function of the claimed invention is disclosed or even suggested by either reference, taken singly or in any proper combination.